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**GOVERNOR O'MALLEY ANNOUNCES NEW INMATE RELEASE POLICY;  
INMATES TO BE RELEASED CLOSER TO HOME, RE-ENTRY-SERVICES**

**TOWSON, MD (August 29, 2007)** – Governor Martin O'Malley announced today that effective immediately the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) has adopted a new inmate release policy that will ensure inmates are released closer to their homes, closer to their families, and closer to re-entry programs and services.

"Today, we are taking concrete steps to make sure offenders who have served their debt to society have the tools and resources they need to re-enter society," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "By releasing our inmates closer to their families, closer to their homes, and closer to re-entry programs and services, we can help ensure that these individuals become full, productive members of our community."

The change in release policy was discussed earlier today by Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) Secretary Gary Maynard and Acting Commissioner of Correction J. Michael Stouffer at a meeting with the Hagerstown-Washington County Chamber of Commerce. J. Michael Stouffer, Acting Commissioner of the Maryland Division of Correction and a lifelong Washington County resident, signed the new policy on August 27.

"The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services has always tried to be a good neighbor to the people of Western Maryland," said Secretary Gary D. Maynard. "Our primary mission has always been the safety of our officers and the communities we serve."

The new release policy comes after a DPSCS-initiated study of inmates released in the first half of 2007 that shows most inmates return to other areas of the state after being released from prisons in Western Maryland.

That study, just completed, shows that of 622 inmates released from facilities in Hagerstown and Cumberland prisons to the supervision of the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation between January and June of 2007, only eight who were not sentenced in Washington County remained there after their release from prison. Six of those eight work jobs that began before their release; the other two have family in the area.

Furthermore, of the 86 inmates who were under no obligation to report to Parole and Probation agents, only one without ties to Hagerstown prior to sentencing remained in that area after his release from prison, according to home plans examined in the same DPSCS study. The study also examined inmate-by-inmate files for those who were sentenced specifically in the Baltimore-Washington area. During the period of January through June of this year, only four of the 272 inmates who had been sentenced in Baltimore City were supervised by Parole and Probation agents in Washington County. Three ex-inmates sentenced in Montgomery County remained under Parole and Probation supervision in Washington County.

According to the new release policy, inmates who are to be supervised by the Division of Parole and Probation upon their release from prisons in Western Maryland will be transported to Baltimore prior to their release unless they have set-up a home plan in the four westernmost counties: Frederick, Washington, Allegany, and Garrett.

During their discussion with the Chamber of Commerce, Secretary Maynard and Acting Commissioner Stouffer reiterated their commitment to quadruple the number of inmates who work before they are released from prison, either in jobs or community partnerships. This reduces idle time for inmates while they are serving their sentences, therefore increasing the safety for correctional staff; it also increases the likelihood that ex-offenders will be employable upon release.

“We strongly support and welcome the new release policy,” said Phil Holmes, Vice President of Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, a key community partner with DPSCS in its statewide re-entry effort. “People being released from prisons need to quickly connect with community-based programs, ideally within 72 hours of release. This policy and the renewed emphasis on employment for inmates are welcomed and much-needed changes.”

The Secretary and Acting Commissioner also praised the local correctional workforce, which supervises more than six thousand inmates in three medium-security prisons, and the Parole and Probation agents, who oversee community supervision for ex-offenders who live in Washington County.

The Maryland Division of Correction operates Roxbury Correctional Institution, the Maryland Correctional Training Center, and the Maryland Correctional Institution-Hagerstown on Roxbury Road five miles south of Hagerstown.

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is the parent agency for both the Division of Correction, whose nearly eight thousand employees oversee approximately 23,000 inmates; and the Division of Parole and Probation, whose dedicated agents supervise more than 67,000 people in the community.

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